be resolved in a humane and practical way. Indian fishermen straying into Sri Lankan waters are sometimes apprehended by the Sri Lankan Navy and Sri Lankan fishermen's associations. The apprehended fishermen are treated humanely and repatriated quickly with facilitation from our High Commission in Colombo and the Government of Tamil Nadu.

Simplifying procedure for Issue of passports

1271. DR. ABRAR AHMED:
SHRI RAJEEV SHUKLA:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that police verification of applicants is one of the major reasons causing delay in the issuing of passports to them in a stipulated period; and

(b) if so, how Government propose to simplify this procedure?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) Yes.

(b) The Passport authorities are in regular interaction with the State Governments to expedite the Police Verification Reports. Coordination Committee at State level headed by Home Secretary have been constituted to, *inter alia,* ensure expeditious police verifications. The Government have also taken up the issue of expediting the police verification reports at other high levels in State Governments.

Strategic dialogue between India and UAE

1272. SHRI VAYALAR RAVI:
DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether in a diplomatic breakthrough, India and the United Arab Emirates have agreed to a framework of strategic dialogue for the first time;

(b) if so, what are the main issues on which both the countries have agreed to help each other;

(c) whether a delegation from the UAE visited India in July, 2003 and had discussions with various leaders including the Deputy Prime Minister; and

(d) if so, to what extent it has helped to improve the relations between the two Countries?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) to (c) India and the United Arab Emirates held the first meeting of a strategic dialogue between the two countries during a visit by a high level delegation from the UAE led by His Highness Sheikh Mohammed Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Chief of Staff of UAE Armed Forces from June 30—July 1, 2003. The discussions covered issues of bilateral, regional and international interest including cooperation in areas of trade and investment, industry, defence and security. It was agreed that the strategic dialogue would be institutionalized to take place annually. An agreement on defence cooperation was signed during the visit. His Highness Sheikh Mohammed called on President, PM, DPM, EAM and RM during the visit.

(d) The institution of a strategic dialogue, the signing of a defence agreement and the wide ranging discussions held during the visit reflects a new level of cooperation between the two countries and their intention to deepen and intensify it for mutual benefit.

China border issue

1273. SHRI K. NATWAR SINGH:
DR.T. SUBBARAMI REDDY:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether India and China have fixed terms for China border issue;

(b) if so, whether India has proposed the National Security Adviser to be the Special Representative and China has also appointed their representative to have talks between two Countries;

(c) whether both Countries will be able to develop economy and reduce tension on borders and improve cultural and other activities;